

TO: Larry D Voyles, Director

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Wildlife Management Division ₁₁₁₀

PRESENTERS: Mike Rabe, Small Game Program Supervisor

TITLE: Consideration of Proposed Commission Order 21–Waterfowl and Commission Order 22–Snipe for the 2008-2009 Hunting Season.

DESCRIPTION: The Commission will consider and may vote to approve Commission Order 21 (Waterfowl) and Commission Order 22 (Snipe), establishing seasons and season dates, bag and possession limits, and open areas. A detailed description of all proposals is available for public review at all Department offices.

DATE: July 16, 2008

Summary:

Commission Order 21 – Waterfowl

Status - Arizona

A total of 7,071 Arizona duck stamps were sold to hunters in 2007-2008, a 4% increase over the stamps sold in the previous season (6,776). The Arizona survey questionnaire estimated 4,630 waterfowl hunters for the 2007-2008 season, 14% more than were estimated in 2006-2007 (4,001). Those hunters spent 33,020 days hunting waterfowl in Arizona; in 2007 hunters spent 28,107 days hunting waterfowl. Duck harvest was higher than last year; 49,782 in 2007-2008 compared to 42,771 in 2006-2007. Goose harvest also increased from 1,996 in 2006-2007 to 2,431 in 2007-2008.

The 2008 midwinter waterfowl survey counted 18,360 ducks, which is a little higher than the number counted in 2007 (16,626). The total goose count was 8,445, which was a decline of 86% from last year's count of 18,181. However, the apparent drop in numbers was due mostly because of the unusually high counts the previous year. In 2007, 16,000 geese were counted on Cibola National Wildlife Refuge; this count was unusually high. Variations in these counts are typical and not a cause for alarm since the midwinter survey is a one-week snapshot of waterfowl in select areas of the state.

The annual spring goose production surveys conducted in Units 1 and 27 indicated a stable resident goose population. The June 2008 survey counted 254 adults and 80 goslings. The June 2007 survey counted 313 adults and 105 goslings (318 geese and 56 goslings were counted in 2006). Although Arizona is not a destination for many breeding geese, we do have these small populations

and also have breeding geese in Units 22 and 23. Protecting these breeding populations is the reason for the delayed start for the goose seasons in these units.

Western Mallard Model

This year, the Pacific Flyway and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agreed to a fundamental change in the way duck seasons are set in the Pacific Flyway. Before this year, duck seasons were set according to a model based on the breeding population estimate of mallards in the mid-continent survey area and habitat conditions in the survey area. This area includes the northern plain states of the U.S., the central plains of Canada, and parts of Alaska and the Yukon Territory. The number of breeding mallards in this area is typically about 8 million ducks. These mid-continent mallards supply most of the mallards hunted in the Central and Mississippi Flyways. They typically contributed about 18% of the harvest in the Pacific Flyway. The majority of the mid-continent birds harvested in the Pacific Flyway come from the Alaska survey area.

This year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, along with the Pacific Flyway, implemented a Western Mallard Model that split the Alaska birds from the mid-continent estimate. Along with the Alaska birds, breeding population estimates from California and Oregon are combined to form the western mallard breeding population estimate. There are plans to include Washington mallards in the near future. These western mallards are then used to determine the duck harvest packages in the Pacific Flyway. For the Pacific Flyway and the USFWS, this new model is a more equitable way to apportion harvest. In other words, most of the birds harvested in the Pacific Flyway are now estimated from birds that end up in the Pacific Flyway in the fall. Under the old system, most of the birds harvested in the Pacific Flyway were never counted. Pacific Flyway seasons were set with birds that never came here.

Once Washington is added, about 80% of the birds harvested in the Pacific Flyway will be included in the breeding population estimate used to set duck seasons each year. This is a much better way to manage ducks in the Pacific Flyway than the previous system. The advantage to Arizona duck hunters is that season selection will likely become less vulnerable to the boom and bust cycles of the prairies. Western mallards, because of their different breeding areas, maintain steadier breeding populations. This should result in more stable duck seasons.

Ducks

For this year, the same harvest packages that were used when the Pacific Flyway was under the mid-continent model will be used. Although the breeding population numbers are in, the model runs were not complete at the time this memo was written. Nevertheless, all indications are that this year's season will be liberal. Whatever the results may be, the season packages available are as follows:

1. Liberal, 107 day season, 7 bird bag limit;
2. Moderate, 86 day season, 7 bird bag limit;
3. Restrictive, 86 day season, 4 bird bag limit.

Both the Liberal and Moderate 2007 Federal framework packages for the Pacific Flyway allow for a 7-bird bag limit, with species bag restrictions of no more than two female mallards, two redheads,

one pintail, one canvasback, and three scaup. The long-term average for pintail and scaup remain below the goals outlined in the management plans for both species. Because the population indices are below population goals, a continuation of the restrictive bag-limit of one bird per day will probably be in place for pintail (and canvasback) for this season. It is possible that we could have shorter seasons for both pintail and canvasback. Should partial, 60 day seasons be necessary for any species, the Department will recommend the full 60 days. Scaup numbers remain below the long-term average by about 27%. In 2006, the Pacific Flyway frameworks reduced the daily bag on scaup from four to three. A further reduction in bag limit is likely for scaup this year. There is also the possibility that scaup will also have a shortened season.

Geese

In 2002, the Pacific Flyway Council requested that the Service include geese in the duck framework extension as well. This was approved, allowing duck and goose seasons to run the same number of days. To assure that Canada goose reproduction in Northern Arizona is not disrupted, goose seasons within Units 1, 22, 23, and 27 start later than goose seasons in the rest of the state.

The Rocky Mountain Population (RMP) of Canada geese are the most important geese in the bags of hunters in the interior states. In July of 2001, the Pacific Flyway Council adopted the management plan for this population of Canada geese, which established a breeding population index of 117,000 birds. Although Arizona typically supports approximately 20 to 40 breeding pairs, the majority of RMP geese wintering in Arizona migrate from northern interior states and southern Alberta, which are already above their respective breeding population objective. In 1999, the Pacific Flyway Council approved a recommendation to increase the daily bag limit on Canada geese from two to three birds. Arizona adopted the framework in the 1999-2000 Commission Order and has continued that recommendation. Results from the January 2007 waterfowl harvest survey revealed that of the 2,431 geese harvested in Arizona, the majority (approximately 1,671 birds), were harvested along the Colorado River.

Department Recommendation:

The Department's recommendations hinge on which regulation package is called for based on the results of the Western Mallard Model. At the time this memo was written, the results of that model were unknown. Therefore, the Department is recommending the following waterfowl season structures based on which framework package is approved. If the frameworks allow a liberal season structure, the Department recommends selecting the Liberal Package below. If the moderate season structure is selected, the Department recommends selecting the Moderate Package below.

Both packages have different season opening and closing dates for the mountain and desert zones. It is most advantageous to hunters to open the season earlier in the mountain zone because birds arrive in mountain waters earlier than they do in the desert, and winter storms often drive those birds to the desert part of the state late in the season. In the desert zone, the season should be open as late as possible because birds typically remain in that zone through February. Both recommendations are within the allowable Federal frameworks.

Liberal Package

	<u>Mountain Zone</u>	<u>Desert Zone</u>
Juniors-Only	Sept. 27 – Sept. 28, 2008	Jan. 31 – Feb 1, 2009
Falconry-Only	Sep. 29 – Oct. 2, 2008	Jan. 26 – Jan. 29, 2009
General Duck	Oct. 3, 2008 – Jan. 11, 2009	Oct. 17, 2008 - Jan. 25, 2009
General Goose	Oct. 3, 2008 – Jan. 11, 2009	Oct. 17, 2008 - Jan. 25, 2009
Partial season	Nov. 13, 2008 – Jan 11, 2009	Nov. 27, 2008 – Jan 25, 2009
Restricted Goose Hunts	Nov 15, 2008 - Jan. 11, 2009 (Units 1 and 27) Nov. 15, 2008 - Jan. 25, 2009 (Units 22 and 23)	

The Mountain and Desert Zones in Arizona are defined by unit within the Federal Register as follows: Desert (South) Zone: Those portions of Units 6 and 8 in Yavapai County, and Units 10 and 12B-45. Mountain (North) Zone: Units 1-5, those portions of Units 6 and 8 within Coconino County, and Units 7, 9, and 12A. Essentially, the North Zone is in the mountainous, high elevation areas of Arizona; the South Zone is in the lowland, desert areas.

The Department is recommending adoption of the federal bag limit of seven ducks (including mergansers) per day, with no more than two female mallards, two redheads, one pintail, three scaup, and one canvasback taken in any one day. Recommended possession limits for ducks are 14 after opening day, with no more than four redheads, two pintails, six scaup, and two canvasbacks. Bag and possession on canvasback, pintail and scaup may change due to final analysis of the harvest strategy for those species. Recommended goose bag limits are no more than four white geese (snow, including blue and Ross' geese) and three dark geese (Canada and white-fronted). Recommended goose possession limits are no more than 8 white geese and six dark geese. The Department recommends that the Commission adopt the species bag limits as prescribed by the Service for the 2008-2009 waterfowl season. Should the Service again require season within a season structure for either canvasback, pintail, or scaup, the Department will recommend selecting the maximum allowable days for those seasons.

Justification:

The Department recommends continuation of the allowable framework extension for either the Moderate or Liberal package. The use of mountain and desert zones is intended to offer mountain hunters the opportunity to hunt ducks and geese when the birds are in those areas. Likewise, the later opening and closing dates for the desert zone allows hunters to hunt as late as possible. Birds arrive earlier in the mountain areas of the state and leave as the waters freeze. In desert areas, many birds arrive later than in the northern areas and stay throughout the winter. Both zones receive the maximum allowance hunt days under both the Liberal and Moderate packages.

Under the Liberal package, there are 107 total hunt days allowed. Under the Moderate package, there are 86 days of general and youth waterfowl hunt days allowable. In the Liberal recommendation above, 101 days are devoted to general waterfowl, four days are a Falconry-Only season and there is a weekend Juniors-Only season in each zone. Federal frameworks require that

the youth hunt be on weekend days within 14 days of the General season, but may be outside the General season frameworks. The bag limits for the Juniors-Only hunts will be the same as during the General season.

Arizona and California are required to coordinate seasons along the lower Colorado River region. California is required to match their season along the Colorado to the Arizona season dates.

Coots and Common Moorhens

Commission Order 21 includes bag limit and season structure for coots and common moorhens within the general duck season frameworks. The Department will continue to recommend the full Federal framework and bag limit on coots and moorhens which is 25 per day, either singly or in the aggregate. Possession for coots and moorhens is 25 in possession, either singly or in the aggregate. Although an Arizona State Waterfowl Stamp is not required for harvest of these species, hunters taking coots or moorhens must have in their possession an Arizona Migratory Bird Stamp that registers them for the Harvest Information Program. Harvest of these species is typically incidental to waterfowl hunting. A total of 984 coots were harvested in the 2007-2008 season. In 2006-2007, 1,739 coots were harvested.

Commission Order 22 - Snipe

During the 2007-2008 season, hunters harvested 130 snipe. In the 2006-2007 season, hunters harvested 233 snipe. Snipe hunter participation and harvest are derived from the waterfowl questionnaire. Even though a waterfowl stamp is not required to hunt snipe, most snipe are taken opportunistically by waterfowl hunters.

The Department recommends that the Commission approve a general snipe season consistent with the total allowable season days and bag and possession limits allowed by the Service for Pacific Flyway states. In Arizona, the allowable bag is 8 snipe per day with a possession limit of 16 after opening day. Seasons for snipe are recommended to run concurrent with the general waterfowl seasons in each of the state's zones.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE, SUBJECT TO FINAL FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS, COMMISSION ORDER 21 - WATERFOWL AND COMMISSION ORDER 22 - SNIPE, AS PRESENTED.**

BB:mjr

Attachments

Hunt Recommendations

Commission Order 21: Waterfowl

General Waterfowl

Open Areas do not include any area closed to hunting under A.R.S. Sections 17-303 and 17-304 or Commission Rules R12-4-301, R12-4-801, R12-4-802 and R12-4-803.

Season Dates	Notes	Open Areas	Legal Wildlife
Oct 17, 2008 - Jan 25, 2009	(1,3,4,5)	Desert Zone: those portions of Units 6 and 8 within Yavapai County and Units 10 and 12B through 45	Ducks including mergansers, coots, and common moorhens (gallinules)
Oct 17, 2008 - Jan 25, 2009	(1,3,4,5)	Desert Zone: those portions of Units 6 and 8 within Yavapai County and Units 10 and 12B through 45 EXCEPT Units 22, 23 and 27	White geese (snow, blue and Ross') and dark geese (Canada and white-fronted)
Oct 3, 2008 - Jan 11, 2009	(2,3,4)	Mountain Zone: Units 1-5, 7, 9, 11M, 12A and those portions of Units 6 and 8 within Coconino County	Ducks including mergansers, coots, and common moorhens (gallinules)
Oct 3, 2008 - Jan 11, 2009	(2,3,4)	Mountain Zone: Units 2-5, 7, 9, 11M, 12A and those portions of Units 6 and 8 within Coconino County	White geese (snow, blue and Ross') and dark geese (Canada and white-fronted)
Nov 15 - Jan 11, 2008	(3,4)	Special Goose Seasons: Units 1 and 27	White geese (snow, blue and Ross') and dark geese (Canada and white-fronted)
Nov 15 - Jan 25, 2008	(3,4)	Special Goose Seasons: Units 22 and 23	White geese (snow, blue and Ross') and dark geese (Canada and white-fronted)

LAWFUL TAKING DEVICE: Shotgun, crossbow, bow and arrow or falconry as prescribed in R12-4-304.

LICENSE REQUIRED: Any valid hunting license plus a valid Arizona Waterfowl Stamp and Federal Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp (i.e., federal Duck Stamp). Falconers must be licensed pursuant to R12-4-422 or exempted pursuant to R12-4-407.

SHOOTING HOURS: One-half hour before sunrise until sunset.

BAG LIMIT: The daily bag limit of ducks, including mergansers: Seven (7) per day not to include more than: two (2) redheads; one (1) pintail; one (1) canvasbacks; seven (7) mallards, no more than two (2) of which may be female or Mexican-like ducks; and two (2) scaup. Coots and common moorhens (gallinules): Twenty-five (25) per day, singly or in the aggregate. Geese: Four (4) white geese (snow, including blue and Ross' geese) per day and three (3) dark geese (Canada and white-fronted) per day.

FALCONRY BAG LIMIT: See Falconry-Only section.

POSSESSION LIMIT: The possession limit of ducks including mergansers: Fourteen (14) after opening day, only seven (7) of which may be taken any one day, but no more than:

- four (4) redheads
- four (4) female mallards or Mexican-like ducks
- two (2) pintails
- four (4) scaup
- two (2) canvasbacks.

Coots and common moorhens (gallinules): Twenty-five (25) singly or in the aggregate.

Geese: Eight (8) white geese (snow, including blue and Ross' geese) and six (6) dark geese (Canada and white-fronted).

FALCONRY POSSESSION LIMIT: See Falconry-Only section.

Juniors-Only Waterfowl

Open Areas do not include any area closed to hunting under A.R.S. Sections 17-303 and 17-304 or Commission Rules R12-4-301, R12-4-801, R12-4-802 and R12-4-803.

Season Dates	Notes	Open Areas	Legal Wildlife
Jan 31 - Feb 1, 2009	(1,3,4,5)	Desert Zone: Those portions of Units 6 and 8 lying within Yavapai County and Units 10 and 12B through 45	Ducks including mergansers, coots, and common moorhens (gallinules); Including white geese (snow, blue and Ross') and dark geese (Canada and white-fronted)
Sep 27 - Sep 28, 2008	(2,3,4)	Mountain Zone: Units 1-5, 7, 9, 11M, 12A, and those portions of Units 6 and 8 within Coconino County	Ducks including mergansers, coots, and common moorhens (gallinules); Including white geese (snow, blue and Ross') and dark geese (Canada and white-fronted)

Juniors-Only Waterfowl

Open Areas do not include any area closed to hunting under A.R.S. Sections 17-303 and 17-304 or Commission Rules R12-4-301, R12-4-801, R12-4-802 and R12-4-803.

Season Dates	Notes	Open Areas	Legal Wildlife
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LAWFUL TAKING DEVICE: Shotgun, crossbow, or bow and arrow as prescribed in R12-4-304.

LICENSE REQUIRED: Any valid hunting license required for participating age 14 and 15; participants age 16 or older must have a valid Arizona Waterfowl Stamp and Federal Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp (i.e., federal Duck Stamp); participants under 14 need not be licensed if accompanied by a licensed adult as prescribed in A.R.S. 17-335.

ELIGIBLE HUNTERS: Pursuant to R12-4-318 persons are eligible to participate throughout the calendar year of their 17th birthday.

SHOOTING HOURS: One-half hour before sunrise until sunset.

BAG LIMIT: The daily bag limit of ducks, including mergansers: Seven (7) per day not to include more than: two (2) redheads; one (1) pintail; one (1) canvasbacks; seven (7) mallards, no more than two (2) of which may be female or Mexican-like ducks; and two (2) scaup. Coots and common moorhens (gallinules): Twenty-five (25) per day, singly or in the aggregate.

Geese: Four (4) white geese (snow, including blue and Ross' geese) per day and three (3) dark geese (Canada and white-fronted) per day.

POSSESSION LIMIT: The possession limit of ducks including mergansers: Fourteen (14) after opening day, only seven (7) of which may be taken any one day, but no more than:

- four (4) redheads
- four (4) female mallards or Mexican-like ducks
- two (2) pintails
- four (4) scaup
- two (2) canvasbacks.

Coots and common moorhens (gallinules): Twenty-five (25) singly or in the aggregate.

Geese: Eight (8) white geese (snow, including blue and Ross' geese) and six (6) dark geese (Canada and white-fronted).

Falconry-Only Waterfowl

Open Areas do not include any area closed to hunting under A.R.S. Sections 17-303 and 17-304 or Commission Rules R12-4-301, R12-4-801, R12-4-802 and R12-4-803.

Season Dates	Notes	Open Areas	Legal Wildlife
Jan 26 - Jan 29, 2009	(4,6)	Desert Zone: Those portions of Units 6 and 8 lying within Yavapai County and Units 10 and 12B through 45	Ducks including mergansers, coots, and common moorhens (gallinules)
Sep 29 - Oct 2, 2008	(2,4,6)	Mountain Zone: Units 1-5, 7, 9, 11M, 12A and those portions of Units 6 and 8 within Coconino County	Ducks including mergansers, coots, and common moorhens (gallinules)

LAWFUL TAKING DEVICE: Falconry as prescribed in R12-4-318 and R12-4-101.

LICENSE REQUIRED: Any valid hunting license plus valid Arizona Waterfowl Stamp and Federal Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp (i.e., federal Duck Stamp). Falconers must be licensed pursuant to R12-4-422 or exempted pursuant to R12-4-407.

HAWKING HOURS: One-half hour before sunrise until sunset.

BAG LIMIT: Three (3) per day. Note: The aggregate falconry bag limit of all migratory game birds is three (3), comprised of any combination of migratory game bird species for which a general season, that includes falconry as a legal method of take, or a falconry-only season is open. Falconers should consult Commission Orders 19, 20, 21, and 22 for season dates and open areas. The falconry bag limit is not in addition to the firearms bag limit.

POSSESSION LIMIT: Six (6) in the aggregate of all migratory game birds in season (Commission Orders 19 through 22) after opening day, of which no more than three (3) may be taken in any one day.

Notes:

- Open areas include the Imperial, Cibola, Buenos Aires and Havasu National Wildlife Refuges EXCEPT for posted portions which shall be closed to all hunting, a fee may be required for hunting on National Wildlife Refuges, see refuge regulations.
- Ashurst Lake in Management Unit 5B is closed to all waterfowl hunting.
- All areas within Arizona are designated nontoxic shot zones. The use or possession of lead shot while waterfowl hunting is prohibited. Waterfowl includes ducks, geese, brant, swans and coots. Lead shot includes plated lead shot. Steel, bismuth, tungsten/iron, tungsten/polymer, tungsten-nickel-iron, and tungsten matrix shot are approved as nontoxic shot.
- Persons 16 years of age or older must have in their possession a valid Federal Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp when taking ducks and geese, and a valid, signed Arizona Waterfowl Stamp attached to their hunting license or printed privileges on their license when taking ducks and geese. This stamp or privilege will automatically register the holder for the federal Harvest Information Program for the taking of ducks and geese. Persons 16 years of age and older must have in their possession a valid Arizona Migratory Bird Stamp or privilege when taking coots and common moorhens pursuant to A.R.S. 17-333.03 and R12-4-203.
- Hunting is not permitted in Unit 42M in the following described area: those private lands lying just north of the Town of Cave Creek in Sections 10, 11, 12, 14, and 15 of Township 6 North, Range 3 East.
- Falconry hunting will not be permitted on National Wildlife Refuges.

Hunt Recommendations

Commission Order 22: Common Snipe

General Common Snipe

Open Areas do not include any area closed to hunting under A.R.S. Sections 17-303 and 17-304 or Commission Rules R12-4-301, R12-4-801, R12-4-802 and R12-4-803.

Season Dates	Notes	Open Areas	Legal Wildlife
Oct 17, 2008 - Jan 25, 2009	(1)	Desert Zone: those portions of Units 6 and 8 within Yavapai County and Units 10 and 12B through 45	Common snipe
Oct 3, 2008 - Jan 11, 2009	(2)	Mountain Zone: Units 1-5, 7, 9, 12A and those portions of Units 6 and 8 within Coconino County	Common snipe

LAWFUL TAKING DEVICE: Shotgun, crossbow, or bow and arrow as prescribed in R12-4-304 and by falconry.

LICENSE REQUIRED: Any valid hunting license plus a valid Arizona Migratory Bird Stamp. Falconers must be licensed pursuant to R12-4-422 or exempted pursuant to R12-4-407.

SHOOTING HOURS: One-half hour before sunrise until sunset.

BAG LIMIT: Eight (8) per day.

POSSESSION LIMIT: Sixteen (16) common snipe after opening day, no more than eight (8) of which may have been taken in any one day.

FALCONRY BAG LIMIT: Three (3) per day. Note: The aggregate falconry bag limit of all migratory game birds is three (3), comprised of any combination of migratory game bird species for which a general season, that includes falconry as a legal method of take, or a falconry-only season is open. Falconers should consult Commission Orders 19, 20, 21, and 22 for season dates and open areas. The falconry bag limit is not in addition to the firearms bag limit.

FALCONRY POSSESSION LIMIT: Six (6) in the aggregate of all migratory game birds in season (Commission Orders 19 through 22) after opening day, of which no more than three (3) may be taken in any one day.

HARVEST INFORMATION PROGRAM (HIP): As required by A.R.S. 17-333.03 and R12-4-203, Snipe hunters age 16 and older shall have in their possession a valid Arizona Migratory Bird Stamp or printed privilege which will validate their license for the federal Harvest Information Program. The Arizona Migratory Bird Stamp may be obtained on or after July 1, from any Arizona Game and Fish Department office or wherever hunting licenses are sold.

Notes:

1. Open areas include the Imperial, Cibola, Buenos Aires and Havasu National Wildlife Refuges EXCEPT for posted portions which shall be closed to all hunting. A fee may be required for hunting on National Wildlife Refuges, see refuge regulations.
2. Ashurst Lake in Unit 5B is closed to common snipe hunting.